

TIPS FOR A HEALTHIER NEW YEAR

Prevent violence by setting good examples

Set limits for your children by letting them know what's expected, and noticing when they meet your expectations. Try to avoid hitting, slapping or spanking. Your children may copy you and think that it is OK to hit other people.

Make sure immunizations are up to date

Review your child's immunization record with your pediatrician. Make sure your child is current on recommended immunizations.

Provide your child with a tobacco-free environment. Second-hand tobacco smoke increases ear infections, chest infections, and even Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. If you smoke, consider quitting. Remember, your child loves you and will copy you - if you smoke, your children may grow up to be smokers, too. Make your home a smoke-free zone.

Read to your child every day

Start by the age of 6 months. Reading to children shows them the importance of communication and motivates them to become readers. It also provides a context to discuss issues and learn what is on your child's mind.

Practice "safety on wheels"

Make sure everyone in the car is buckled up for every ride, with children in the back seat in age-appropriate child safety seats. All bikers, skaters and skateboarders should wear helmets and other appropriate sports gear.

Do a "childproofing" survey of your home

A child's-eye view home survey should systematically go from room to room, removing all the "booby traps" that await the curious toddler or preschooler. Think of poisons, small objects, electrical outlets, sharp edges, knives and firearms, and places to fall.

Monitor your children's "media"

Monitor what your children see and hear on television, in movies, and in music. Children are affected by what they see and hear, particularly in these times of violent images. Talk with your children about "content." If you feel that a movie or TV program is inappropriate, redirect them to more suitable programming. Help Kids Understand Tobacco, Alcohol, and the Media. Help your teenager understand the difference between the misleading messages in advertising and the truth about the dangers of using alcohol and tobacco products. Talk about ads with your child. Help your child understand the real messages being conveyed. Help direct your child toward TV shows and movies that do not glamorize the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.

Pay attention to nutrition. Nutrition makes a big difference in how kids grow, develop and learn. Good nutrition is a matter of balance. Provide foods from several food groups at each meal. Emphasize foods that are less processed, such as whole grain breads and cereals and fresh fruits and vegetables. Review your child's diet with your pediatrician for suggestions.

Become more involved in your child's school and your child's education. Visit your child's school. Become active in the parent-teacher organization. Volunteer in the classroom or for special projects. Be available to help with homework. If your child's education is important to you, it will be important to him.

Make your children feel loved and important

Kids develop a sense of self-worth early in life. Listen to what your children have to say. Assure them that they are loved and safe. Celebrate their individuality, and tell them what makes them special and what you admire about them.